



September 18, 2002

The Honorable Richard Cheney
President of the Senate
Washington, DC 20510-0010

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed is a draft bill, entitled the "Marine Mammal Protection Act Amendments of 2002". Also enclosed is a section-by-section analysis of the proposed bill.

The purpose of this draft legislation is to authorize appropriations for the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972 (U.S.C. § 1361 et seq.) through Fiscal Year 2007, to amend the MMPA to expand the authority of management agreements with Alaska Native Organizations, and to make technical and clarifying amendments to the MMPA. Enactment of this proposed legislation would enhance conservation of marine mammals, strengthen the Federal Government's relations with Native Alaskans, streamline implementation of the MMPA, and make efficient use of Administration resources consistent with the President's budget.

The amendments contained in Title II of this legislative proposal provide for the implementation of management measures to regulate subsistence taking of marine mammals prior to depletion. Under the current legislation, harvest restrictions for stocks not formally designated as depleted are strictly voluntary. The Alaska Native community expressed a desire for enforceable management measures and subsequently worked with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Marine Mammal Commission, to develop a consensus framework for management plans that could include such measures. The proposed amendments provide an opportunity for Alaska Native Organizations, at their initiative, to develop enforceable management plans in cooperation with the appropriate Federal managing agency. This proposal provides substantial conservation benefits as well as a meaningful role for the Alaskan Native community in managing resources upon which they depend.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this proposal and that its enactment would be in accord with the program of the President.

Sincerely,

Theodore W. Kassinger

Enclosures

Identical Letters Sent to:

The Honorable Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6501

The Honorable Thomas A. Daschle
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1601

The Honorable Dick Armey
House Majority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6503

The Honorable Richard Gephardt
House Minority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6502

The Honorable Trent Lott
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-7010

The Honorable James V. Hansen
Chairman, Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6201

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6201

The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6125

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6125